

CLAIMS

1. A distributed agent system including an agent-configurator, the agent-configurator including:
- 5 (a) an agent component selector for allowing user selection of one or more of a plurality of possible agent components;
- (b) an agent process selector for allowing user selection of one or more of a plurality of possible processes for use by the selected agent components, and
- (c) a customised agent description store for grouping the selected
- 10 components and processes together, the said grouping defining the customised agent.
2. A distributed agent system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the agents include:
- 15 a plurality of agent components, each of which includes processes arranged to carry out a particular task for the agent;
- a group message board within at least some of the components, for mediating communications between processes of the same component;
- an internal message board, for mediating communications between
- 20 processes of different components, and
- an external message board, for mediating communications with other agents in the agent community.
- a 3. A distributed agent system as claimed in claim 1 ~~or claim 2~~, including a
- 25 host-selector, arranged to determine the physical location of each customised agent, within the system, based on agent deployment policies or rules.
- a 4. A distributed agent system as claimed in ^{claim 1} ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ in which the host-selector is further arranged to allow the user manually to determine the
- 30 physical location of each customised agent.
5. A method of creating user-customised agents for use in a distributed network, the method comprising:

(a) selecting one or more agent components from a plurality of possible agent components;

(b) selecting one or more processes for use by the selected components from a plurality of possible processes, and

5 (c) grouping the selected processes and components together to create a customised agent.

6. A method of creating user-customised agents as claimed in claim 5, including automatically determining the location of each customised agent, within
10 the system, based on pre-defined deployment policies or rules.

7. A distributed platform for co-ordinating user access to information provided by content service providers, the platform comprising:

(a) a user interface;

15 (b) a first advertising board for advertising services of information brokers;

(c) a first searching agent for searching the first advertising board for services based on the request from the user;

(d) a second advertising board for advertising the services of information
20 content suppliers;

(e) a second searching agent for searching the second advertising board for available services based on results of the search of the first advertising means and the request from the user, and

(f) means for providing the results of the search of the second
25 advertising means to the user.

8. A distributed platform as claimed in claim 7, wherein the first and second advertising boards are distributed.

30 9. A distributed platform as claimed in claim 7 ~~or claim 8~~, wherein a plurality of first and second advertising boards are provided each of which advertises the services available in a particular market.

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claim 7

10. A distributed platform as claimed in ~~any one of claims 7 to 9~~, wherein means are provided for interrogating the user to determine specific preferences.

11. A distributed platform as claimed in claim 10, wherein the specific preferences comprise where and/or how and/or when the information found by the second searching means, is to be communicated to the user.

claim 7

12. A distributed platform as claimed in ~~any one of claims 7 to 11~~, wherein a banking agent is provided for monitoring all financial transactions that take place as a result of the request from the user, between the information brokers and the information content suppliers.

13. A distributed platform as claimed in claim 12, wherein each user has an account that is monitored by the banking agent is up-dated as soon as response to a request for information is accepted for delivery to the user.

claim 1

14. A distributed platform as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein a marketing agent is provided for setting up the first and second advertising boards and subsequent boards introduced onto the platform.

15. A distributed platform as claimed in claim 14, wherein the marketing agent arranges the boards according to the type of services being marketed thereon.

16. A distributed platform for co-ordinating user access to information provided by content service providers, the platform comprising:

- (a) a user interface;
- (b) a content service provider advertising board for advertising services of content service providers;
- (c) a first searching agent for searching the content service provider advertising board for services, based on the request from the user; and
- (d) means for providing the results of the search of the content service provider advertising board to the user.

17. A distributed platform as claimed in claim 16, further including:

(a) a broker advertising board for advertising the services of brokers that act as intermediaries between the content service provider and the user; and

(b) a second searching agent for searching the broker advertising board for available services based on the request from the user,

5 wherein the second searching agent identifies a suitable broker and the first searching agent is associated with that broker.

18. A distributed agent system including a plurality of agents arranged to interact one with another within an agent community, each agent including:

10 (a) a plurality of agent components, each of which includes processes arranged to carry out a particular task for the agent;

(b) a group message board within at least some of the components, for mediating communications between processes of the same component;

(c) an internal message board, for mediating communications between
15 processes of different components; and

(d) an external message board, for mediating communications with other agents in the agent community.

19. A distributed agent system as claimed in claim 18, wherein inter-component
20 messages are sent from the group message board to the internal message board.

a 20. A distributed agent system as claimed in claim 18 ~~or claim 19~~, wherein inter-component messages are received by the group message board from the internal message board.

25 a 21. A distributed agent system as claimed in ~~any one of claims 18 to 20~~, wherein inter-agent messages pass from the internal message board to the external message board and from there to the external agent to which the inter-agent message is directed.

30 a 22. A distributed agent system as claimed in ~~any one of claims 18 to 21~~, wherein inter-agent messages are received in the external message board and passed to the internal message board.

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claim 18

23. A distributed agent system as claimed in ~~any one of claims 18 to 22~~, wherein the internal and external message boards are in the same component.

Claim 18

24. A distributed agent system as claimed in ~~any one of claims 18 to 23~~,
5 wherein a filter is provided for delegating or defining where messages should be passed.

25. A distributed agent system as claimed in claim 24, wherein the filter is registered in the internal message board.

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26. A distributed agent system as claimed in claim 24 ~~or 25~~, wherein the filter is registered in the group message board.